

Stoneham Finance & Advisory Board Meeting
Monday, April 1, 2019 - 7:00 pm
Stoneham Town Hall Hearing Room

Attendees:

Tim Waitkevitch, Chair
Heidi Bilbo, Vice Chair

Jeremy Doyle	Andrew Harmon
Ed Hurley	Susan Lippman
Cory Mashburn	Wendy Smith

Absent: Devin Desmarais, Domenic Martignetti, Chris Waszak

Guests:

Dennis Sheehan - Town Administrator
David Castellarin - Town Accountant
Al Rego - Budget Analyst

Agenda:

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. FY20 Budget Review and Recommendation

Minutes:

Finance & Advisory Board Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. Mr. Waitkevitch opened the meeting with Agenda Item #1. All members in attendance rose and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board Chair then moved onto Agenda Item #2. Prior to beginning the budget review, Mr. Waitkevitch noted that the Town Administrator had submitted a revision to the Water and Sewer Budget Assessment. Mr. Waitkevitch asked the Town Accountant (in attendance) what prompted the revised numbers. Mr. Castellarin indicated that this was due to updated preliminary numbers that became available.

Mr. Waitkevitch then led the Board into its budget review process. He asked that the Board consider including written explanations and notes as applicable on particular budget items as the discussion takes place. The Board assented.

The Board began with the Town Moderator budget. Ms. Bilbo indicated that the Moderator was happy with the proposed budget.

Next was the Select Board budget. Ms. Bilbo indicated that the Board was satisfied with the proposal. Mr. Mashburn asked about the increase in the Purchases/Services line item. He found the answer in the details of the Budget Book under Printing Services.

Next was the Town Administrator budget. Mr. Waitkevitch noted that this budget item was noted in the Book as a significant change. Mr. Mashburn asked about the reduction in the Car Allowance line item. Mr. Sheehan indicated that the previous Administrator had a car allowance in his contract, but Mr. Sheehan does not.

Next was the Finance and Advisory Board budget. Ms. Smith asked why the Board has any budget allowance. Ms. Bilbo clarified that this was for maintaining memberships and attending conferences (potentially).

Next was the Finance and Advisory Board Reserve Fund. Mr. Doyle stated that the cash put into reserve is in line with thematic discussions at the Tri-Board meetings in the past few months. Mr. Hurley asked what the recommended amount in reserve should be. Mr. Castellarin noted that the recommendations are currently between \$225K and \$275K. Mr. Waitkevitch suggested that the Board write up its thoughts around this particular line item. Mr. Harmon agreed to draft something while the Board moved on to other matters.

Next was the Town Accountant budget. Ms. Bilbo took the time to commend Mr. Castellarin and Mr. Rego on the quality of the FY20 Budget Book. Ms. Lippman indicated that the budget for the Accountant's office is likely low. The concern is that the Town is not competitive in this regard.

Next was the budget for Purchasing and Procurement. Mr. Waitkevitch wanted to write some notes for this item, as it is a new department. There was discussion about how the salary is allocated through the Budget. Mr. Harmon agreed to add these notes to the ongoing draft. Mr. Mashburn added that it might be worth considering a Grant Writer for the Town. Mr. Waitkevitch indicated that would be an interesting topic for a future Finance Board meeting.

Next was the Board of Assessors budget. Ms. Lippman asked whether the elected assessors are paid. Mr. Castellarin confirmed that they are. The Board then moved on to the Treasurer and Collector budget. Mr. Mashburn called attention to the significant increase over FY19. The increase is due to Collector's fees. These were taken out of Town revenue for FY20.

There was then a general discussion about what the Town Meeting attendees would receive at the meeting.

The Board then moved on to the Town Counsel and Management Information Systems budgets. There were no comments on these items. Mr. Waitkevitch mentioned that a comment should be prepared for the Town Clerk budget. This is because the Elections Department will be a part of the Town Clerk's department starting in FY20.

Next was the Public Property Maintenance budget item. Ms. Bilbo suggested highlighting the efficiencies in this new department as we see them occur in other places throughout the budget. Ms. Smith asked to whom this new department would report. Mr. Sheehan replied that it would report to the Town Administrator. Mr. Harmon will add commentary surrounding this department to the draft write-up of the budget. The Board then had a general discussion about the logistics of the department with the Administrator and the Accountant.

The next budget item up for discussion was the Police department. Mr. Doyle summarized some of the significant changes to the FY20 Police budget. Ms. Lippman asked for a clarification on how the expense of an officer at the High School is allocated. Ms. Bilbo wanted the group commentary to include a note about the new police vehicle replacement cycle.

The Board then moved on to the Fire Department budget. Again, Mr. Doyle summarized major changes and indicated that the Fire Chief was generally satisfied with the FY20 budget. The group then discussed the addition of new firefighters in 2019. The group was pleased about that development and it was decided that it was a development worth mentioning in the summary.

The next item for discussion was the Inspection budget. Mr. Doyle asked the Town Administrator to explain the staffing levels in this department. Mr. Sheehan explained that there is a building inspector, an electrical inspector and an office support person.

Next was the Emergency Management budget. Ms. Smith asked how this item is administered. Mr. Castellarin explained that this is handled by the Fire Department.

The next budget item for discussion is the School Department. Mr. Mashburn relayed some of the Superintendent's thoughts about the FY20 budget, which were generally positive. His greatest concern was how to properly fund Special Education. The Board then moved to a discussion of the assessments for Regional and Vocational schools.

The Board moved to discussion of Public Works. Mr. Waitkevitch had some general inquiries about the Recycling Coordinator. Mr. Sheehan explained that facilities are accepting far less recyclables than they used to prior to China's new waste acceptance policy. The Coordinator position is designed to maximize the amount of Stoneham recycling that gets accepted. Mr. Hurley asked for clarification on why Water and Sewer were separate items from Public Works despite being administered by the Department. Mr. Castellarin explained that these are Enterprise Funds and are self-sustaining.

Mr. Hurley also brought up the idea of a replacement cycle for Public Works vehicles. Mr. Sheehan acknowledged that this was a good idea to consider in future budget cycles. For now, any unforeseen breakdowns would need to be addressed as best it can through reserve funds. Mr. Waitkevitch (as the Board's representative on the Capital Committee) noted that Capital had discussed the idea of a replacement cycle.

The next budget item for discussion was Public Health. Mr. Mashburn relayed that the Public Health Director has noted that there is a standing request for an additional Inspector since 2014. Mr. Sheehan acknowledged the request and more generally acknowledged that not every Director would be able to get everything on their wish list. He went on to explain that there are ongoing discussions with Public Health about how best to accommodate inspection needs.

The Board then moved to the Council on Aging, Recreation, Veterans and Community Addiction budgets. There was some limited discussion about how grant money affects these areas and the projects in which they would like to engage.

The next item was the Library budget. Mr. Mashburn noted that the Library has not had a new, full-time staff member added since 2004. But the Director was happy about the creation of the new Facilities department.

Stoneham Arena was the next budget item up for discussion. Mr. Doyle asked about profitability of the Arena. Mr. Sheehan replied that the Arena is cash-flow positive. The revenue for the Arena is present in the general revenue number in the budget.

Up next was Debt Service, Pensions, Health Insurance, Unclassified, Non-Departmental and Whip Hill Trust items. Mr. Mashburn asked why the budget for the Memorial Day Parade is not allocated to the Veteran's Department. Mr. Castellarin explained that, by doing that, the Veteran's Director would need to sign off on all expenses related to the Parade.

The last items up for discussion were the Water and Sewer Enterprise Funds. There was no commentary from the Board on these items.

As a recap to the entire discussion, Mr. Doyle inquired as to whether the Board should comment on the Pavement allocation (in the Public Works budget). Mr. Waitkevitch suggested that this, like other items, may be better suited for a Fiscal Health Check in the coming year.

There was then a brief discussion about pension performance and how to service the pension liabilities.

Mr. Harmon then shared his draft commentary on the aforementioned discussion topics. The draft was put on the screen and read aloud by Mr. Harmon. A few edits were suggested and integrated into the document. The group then agreed that this commentary would serve as the Board's explanation for its vote on the FY20 Town budget.

Mr. Waitkevitch also shared a draft of the letter from the Finance and Advisory Board that would be added to the Town Meeting Guide. He then suggested that the Board hold a vote on the recommendation of the FY20 Budget. Ms. Lippman introduced the motion to recommend favorable action on the budget as presented (and amended by the Water and Sewer changes presented earlier in the meeting). Mr. Harmon seconded; all members in favor.

Mr. Waitkevitch then reminded the Board of a meeting on April 8, 2019. The purpose of the off-cycle meeting is to go over the upcoming Town Meeting Warrant Articles.

Ms. Lippman made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Harmon seconded; all in favor.